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## Repenser les limites : l'architecture à travers l'espace, le temps et les disciplines

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# Digitalizing the Dutch. About interactivity versus boundaries and other ways to present and read architectural history

Margit Tamás and Ir Héctor Giró

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## Architectural Visualization

- 1 Plans and sections do not suffice to express and communicate architect's ideas and proposals.

When simulating the environment and conveying the design information, three-dimensional representation is essential. [Re]presenting in three dimensions not only helps the designer when communicating with all the different participants through the whole design and realisation process but also, and crucially, with him/herself.

At the same time, developments in computer modelling and rendering are proceeding very fast.

Traditionally, and yet usually however, the very first steps in designing are free hand sketches. At the same time, physical models and free hand drawn images have a looser quality and appeal more to people than the majority of digital images; and in most cases are given a higher valuation.

Accordingly, and as mentioned above, our students are then encouraged to explore the significance and the opportunities to combine all kinds of media, like video film, images of physical scale models, free hand drawings, photography and animations and renderings of computer models.

## Media at the Delft Faculty of Architecture

- 2 The Department of Media encourages students to explore and combine the different available media. Besides, they also learn from each other, in a laboratory-like environment, and discover or develop further their own personal style, their signature, in visual presentation.
- 3 During the several modules our department offers, the students learn and experiment with all kind of visualisation and presentation techniques that are particularly applicable to the design process and for the final presentation of a project. Techniques such as spatial sketching, free hand presentation drawing, physical and digital modelling, photography, video, and endoscopy are extremely useful. By combining them, students get a powerful instrument to visualise and communicate their plans. It also makes this process much easier, and even possible. In addition, software and video film, as another kind of notation, help communicate a wider scope of qualities of the designs. In this way, architects can now make as well use of tools that traditionally were only available to film makers.

## The Bonas Foundation

- 4 The Bonas Foundation is affiliated to the NAI [Netherlands Architecture Institute]. 'The Bonas Foundation compiles bibliographies and lists of works of Dutch architects, urban planners and garden and landscape architects, publishes monographs and affords public access to its data through an interactive computer system' [www.bonas.nl]. The foundation reconstructs, documents and publishes the oeuvre of important Dutch designers. In this way, architecture is not only to be found in archive or museum but becomes part of our collective memory as well. This unique collection is especially useful for the creation of interactive multimedia presentations. The combination of historical archives and modern presentation techniques generates interesting results.
- 5 Bonas and the Department of Form and Media Studies of the Faculty of Architecture at the Delft University of Technology [The Netherlands] work together in the realisation of an educational module. During this module, the students create multimedia presentations and subsequently, sites dedicated to Dutch architects and designers. In addition, this digital archive becomes available to a wide public.

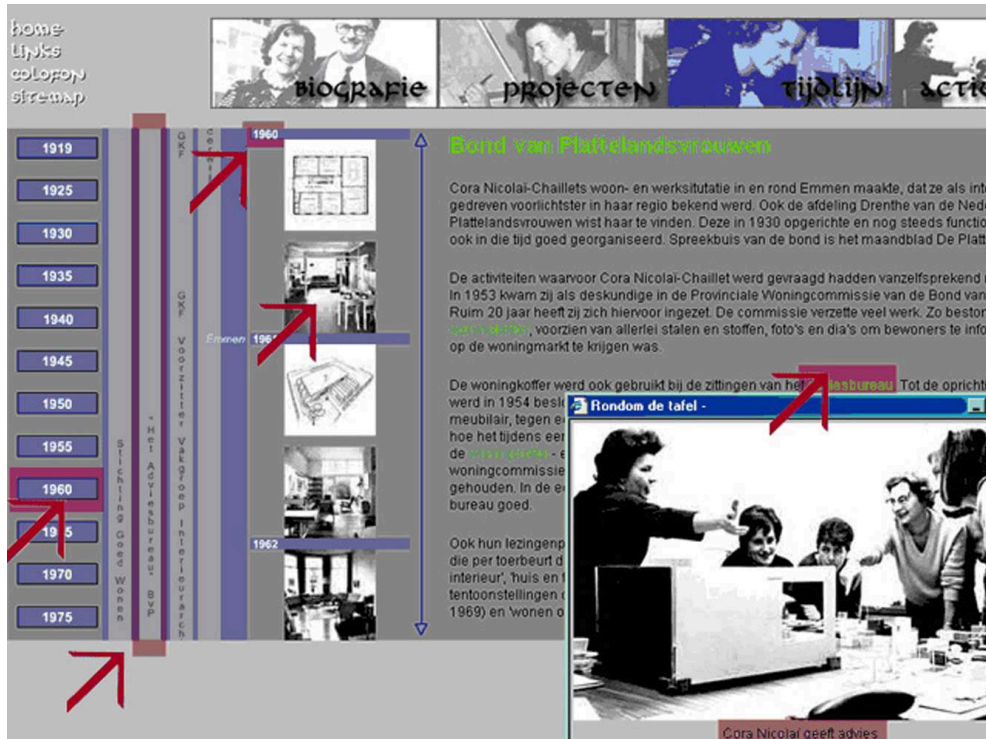


Fig. 1

## Digitalizing the Dutch

- 6 The unique collection of Bonas is particularly appropriate to create interactive multimedia presentations.

Hereto, our Department of Media offers a multidisciplinary media module.

This module allows students to investigate and present architecture in a non-linear way. They are asked to select the various, rich material in order to produce concise presentations. The presentations are directed to a wide public and dedicated to the oeuvre of Dutch architects.

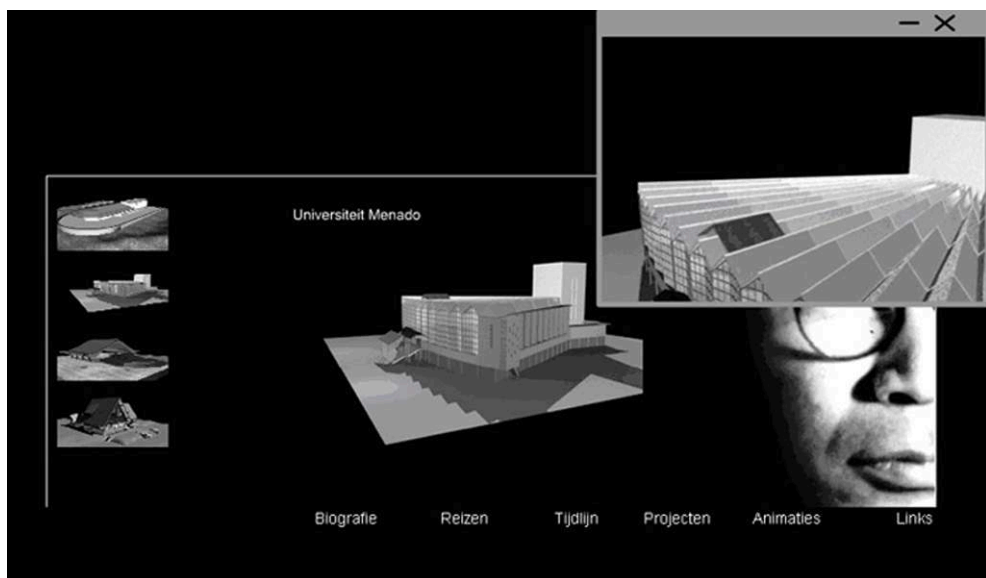


Fig. 2

- 7 The students are also asked to search for new connections or relations within images or between images and text. The navigation scheme should allow the material being organized and presented in a different context.

In addition, as part of these multimedia presentations, the students create 3-d models, render images and animations, build panoramic photos and make films. People can 'walk' through still or animated views of the physical or digital models.

Except for the better exploration of the models, this increases remarkably the sense of scale and the understanding of the plans.

Architectural History becomes, consequently, visible and can be experienced in three dimensions.

At the same time, new tools allow fresh, new visions and facilitate a qualitative and renewed analysis of the historical material.

Different aspects have formed the base of this undertaking:

- how do new media influence the way we look at 'traditional' documents such as freehand drawings, old photos etc.
- do new media make that students, and others, draw more attention to these oeuvres?
- Does this forgotten work become "cool" in same way?
- except for the chronological approach, which other ways can be followed to study architectural objects?
- is there a "logical" sequence to present these works? or will the links [internal and external] show new ways to look at them, within in new framework?
- how different are the perspectives of both the creator of the site and the visitors? and
- will the identity of these works change, as a result of new interpretations
- would this imply a sort of "randomization"?
- do we really comprehend the new dimensions all this gets when placed in a world wide network?

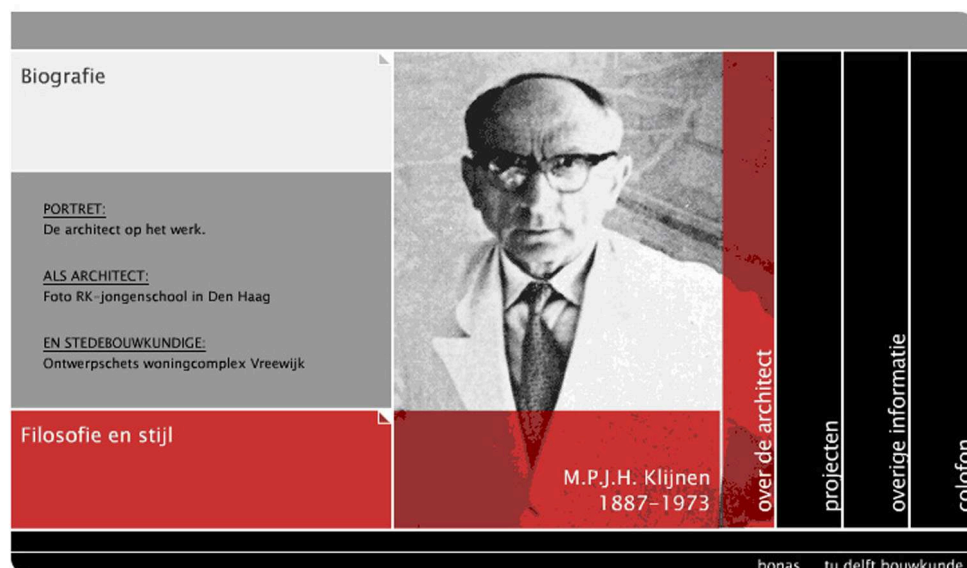


Fig. 3

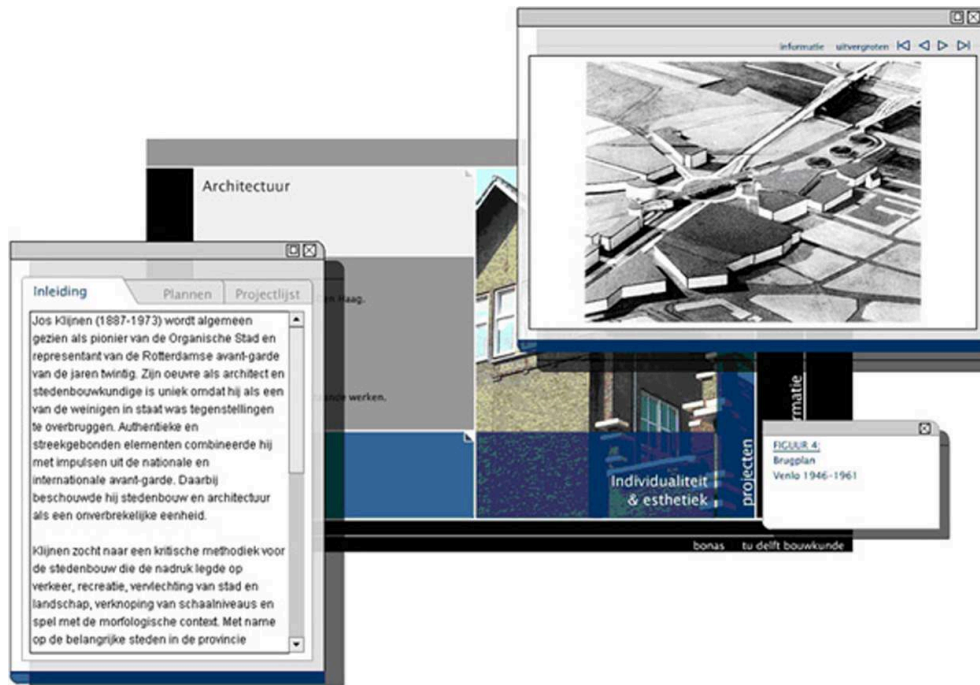


Fig. 4

## Conclusions

- 8 These above mentioned questions represent the basis every time we start the module. The project is ongoing and even when, at the moment, not all the questions can be accurately answered, we can still draw attention to most of the aspects mentioned above.
- 9 This project reconstructs and documents the oeuvre of important Dutch designers. As a result, a digital archive becomes available to a wide public. Through the Internet, the oeuvre of 'forgotten' architects is published worldwide. In addition, this way of presenting information reaches more easily the younger generations and plays an important role on whether all these material will be 'discovered' if at all. The BONAS website –[www.bonas.nl](http://www.bonas.nl)– designed also by our students, collects the sites dedicated to the different architects. Except for their work, the sites offer information about the architects as well. By means of different media, such as images, sound or film, people come to know the different aspects of their lives.
- 10 Software helps also communicate a wider range of characteristics and qualities of the plans. All the techniques mentioned above, such as free hand drawing, physical and computer modelling, photography and video are extremely useful, and by combining them, students get a powerful instrument to visualise and communicate the designs. Together with other features and manipulations, and the dimension of time, all this material becomes indispensable notations of the plans.
- 11 On the other hand, the architectural object is mostly designed attached to a place and translated into a determined materialisation. Interactive presentations can tell

different stories, free of these limitations.

They can often explore and show fundamental aspects of the designs, which cannot be shown or experienced by means of other media. This material can be then read as a new notation, another kind of score of the plans, and play an important role on whether certain aspects and intentions of the designer are communicated if at all.

In addition, links are created among diverse information sources while all the material can be reached real time. Both the aspect time and the interrelationship among [contemporary] events become more comprehensible. At the same time all the information can be arranged or selected according to different criteria. It can be organised geographically, according to styles, etc.

- 12 The students work thus at a renewed analysis of historical material. This material, influenced by their personal approach, is presented in a different framework and finds, at the same time, new ways to reach a wider public.

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## ABSTRACTS

A lot of important work of architects, with the exception of the well-known architects and buildings, becomes or remains forgotten to most people.

As a result, it can turn out to be difficult to reconstruct both their work and the circumstances and ideas upon which it has been based. At the same time, important pieces of the identity of our built environment will be missing.

Archives and collections store this oeuvre and make it available to the community. However, and apart from researchers, this material does not commonly appeal to most people –or students.

Media developments bring new methods for communicating knowledge and ideas and offer attractive possibilities to *publish* this material, through the World Wide Web, for example.

But except for this important achievement, it also represents a *new approach* to look at the contents.

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**Mots-clés:** architecture, architecte, The Bonas foundation

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